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ABSTRACTAPPARATUS AND METHOD FOR FACILITATING
ORDERING AND SUPPLY

5 A method and apparatus for ordering and facilitating the collection of items
such as food items. A set of user terminals 12 may be distributed around a building,
each user terminal 12 being connected to a central server 10. The central server 10 is
also connected to one or more operator terminals 14 located in the building canteen.
A user may order the food at the user terminal 12 by perusing a menu and making
10 selections. The user also inserts a smart card which serves to identify the user as an
account holder in the central server 10 database. After making selections, the
information is stored in the central server 10 and is collated so that the food items
selected by all the users requiring food from the canteen are known by the central
server 10 before some defined cut-off point in time. The collated order is then sent
15 by the central server 10 to the operator terminals 14 so that an appropriate number of
each ordered food item can be prepared. To collect the food, the user simply inserts
his smart card into an operator terminal 14 and his order is displayed. Preferably, the
smart card is also used to transact payment of the food and the central server 10 may
be connectable to the internet 22 so as to allow remote ordering by users and to allow
20 the central server 10 to order raw materials from suppliers in accordance with how
much raw material has been actually used.

Figure 3